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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Health Advisory: West Nile Virus**

**Kerrville, Texas (May 20, 2016)** – The Texas Department of State Health Services is advising residents that it has received the first reported case of West Nile Virus of this year.

The report came from the City of El Paso Department of Public Health on Thursday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

As this is the first case of West Nile virus this year, the DSHS is reminding citizens to take precautions to prevent mosquito bites and transmission of the potentially deadly disease.

Recent focus has been on the Zika Virus, an illness relatively new to the Western Hemisphere that has yet to be transmitted by mosquitoes in Texas. Health officials continue preparing for the possibility that Zika could spread in Texas, however West Nile virus has officially made a return this summer and the DSHS advises that precautions should be taken. In 2015, West Nile caused 275 reported cases of illness in the state, including 16 deaths.

In order to reduce exposure to West Nile and other mosquito-borne viruses the Texas Department of State Health Services recommends the following precautions:

- Use an EPA-approved insect repellent, such as those containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535 or oil of lemon eucalyptus/para-menthane-diol. Individuals should follow the instructions on the label and use repellent every time they go outside.
- Regularly drain standing water, including water collecting in empty cans, tires, buckets, clogged rain gutters and saucers under potted plants. Mosquitoes that spread West Nile virus breed in stagnant water.
- Wear long sleeves and pants when outside.
- Use air conditioning and make sure screens on all doors and windows are in good condition to keep mosquitoes from entering the home.

The same precautions will also help prevent Zika, although West Nile virus is primarily transmitted by *Culex* mosquitoes, which are most active around dawn and dusk, and Zika is spread by *Aedes* mosquitoes, which usually bite during the day.

There are no medications to treat or vaccines to prevent West Nile virus infection. People over 50 years old and those with other health issues are at a higher risk of becoming seriously ill or dying when they become infected with the virus. If an individual has symptoms and suspects a West Nile virus infection, he or she should contact a healthcare provider.

Symptoms of West Nile virus include headache, fever, muscle and joint aches, nausea and fatigue. A more serious form of illness, West Nile neuroinvasive disease, can also cause neck stiffness, disorientation, tremors, convulsions, paralysis and coma.

For the latest news on the spread of West Nile Virus, DSHS will post West Nile case counts by county at [www.dshs.state.tx.us/news/updates.shtm](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/news/updates.shtm).

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